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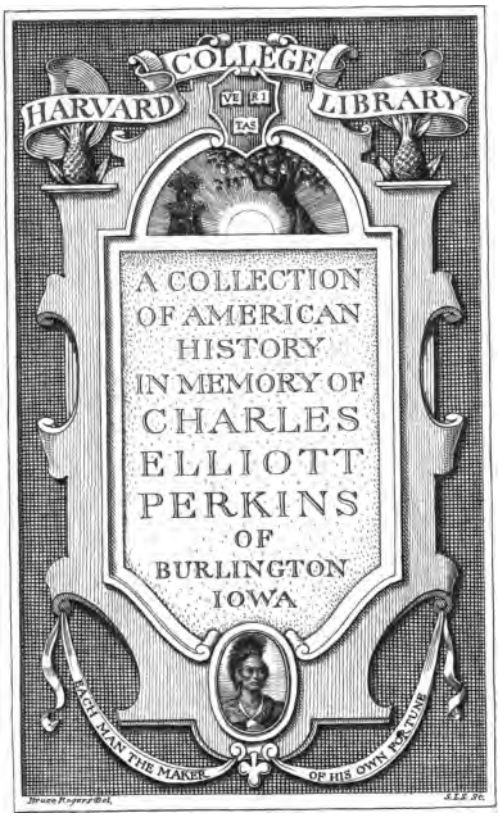
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Municipal Railway

of

San Francisco

by

MARTIN S. VILAS, A. M.,

Member of the

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September 1, 1915

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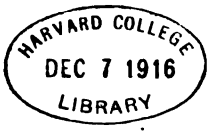

The writer has received favors from a number of men in San Francisco in preparing what he here makes public on the Municipal Railway of San Francisco. He expresses his especial appreciation to Supt. Thomas Cashin and to Asst. Supt. Fred Boeken, both of the San Francisco Municipal Railway, for unusual courtesy and consideration. These enabled the writer to reach a considerable number of facts connected with the Railway, not otherwise readily accessible. City Engineer M. M. O'Shaughnessy has been always ready to give in a very courteous manner whatever information he could. Supt. J. W. Harris of the California Street Cable Railway Co. and Manager C. N. Black of the United Railroads, showed a very obliging spirit in making plain conditions connected with their respective lines.

MUNICIPAL RAILWAY OF SAN FRANCISCO

I.

Municipal Ownership of Public Utilities Usually Profitable.

If a city can manage well its graveyards, its poor department, its police department, its fire department, its parks and its streets and thus bring to the minimum the cost of these municipal requirements, always an expense pure and simple, does anyone know a sound and adequate reason why the city cannot as well manage its street car lines, its water, its gas and its electricity, ordinarily all highly profitable under private ownership? If cities can manage these as well, why do they not manage them and thus endeavor to earn something toward paying for the other public needs mentioned and thereby to lift a bit, anyway, of the always heavy burden from the groaning backs of the taxpayers? Why do they not, and why have they not generally so managed them in the United States? There are several reasons.

(1) There is an old-fashioned, senseless thought that a city or town collects taxes and spends them for the benefit of its people, but that never should the municipality make a dollar. This would be foreign to the objects of its existence. This would be contrary to the constitution; anyway, contrary to the precedents of the fathers. It would be hostile to the original, correct and untarnished functions of true government. Good old learned Ruskin in Flors Claveriga wrote that "A government is an apparatus for collecting and spending money." Most of the world have been enthusiastic Ruskinites as to this statement at least.

(2) We are afraid to take up the management of the public utilities, commonly profitable. The liver of the taxpayer almost ever has been of alabaster hue. He fears new ventures. He dares not trust his representatives outside of the time honored and the travel stained. He sees dark, villainous financial disaster lurking in the path of every new public project. It were better not to have, than by venturing to run the dangerous hazard

MUNICIPAL RAILWAY

ANALYSIS OF PASSENGER RECEIPTS BY LINES.

	Total	Geary to Park (A)	Geary to Beach (B)	Union St. (E)	Van Ness Ave. (D)	Potrero Ave. (H)	Stockton St. (F)
January	$ 82,635.60	$ 25,025.60	$ 29,923.55	$ 27,686.45	Commenced	Commenced	Commenced
February	76,159.75	23,365.55	26,655.60	26,138.60	Operations	Operations	Operations
March	88,266.75	27,486.30	31,288.65	29,491.80	Aug. 15, 1914	Aug. 15, 1914	Dec. 28, 1914
April	84,747.85	26,177.90	29,752.20	28,817.75			
May	86,645.90	27,539.65	30,107.50	28,998.75			
June	85,025.60	27,698.60	30,208.95	27,118.05			
July	86,439.10	27,484.60	30,790.90	28,163.60			
August	98,272.30	28,935.10	30,994.85	27,320.10	$ 8,006.10	$ 3,016.15	
September	109,447.80	27,365.70	32,372.90	25,179.15	15,809.70	8,720.35	
October	115,571.70	27,606.25	34,601.65	26,493.85	18,058.80	8,811.15	
November	109,331.10	25,317.00	31,410.85	25,621.60	18,741.00	8,240.65	
December	113,948.15	25,274.80	31,760.90	25,827.00	21,550.35	8,536.70	$ 998.40
	$1,136,491.60	$319,277.05	$369,868.50	$326,856.70	$82,165.95	$37,325.00	$ 998.40
	20,001.60	(Union St. 21 dys. Dec., '13)		20,001.60			
	$1,156,493.20	Total 5c fares		$346,858.30			
		$23,397.96 transfers honored by connecting lines.					
	11,275.66	12,122.30 transfers honored from connecting lines.					
	$1,145,217.54						
	5,018.85	School tickets, Q. M. D. tickets, special cars, etc.					
	$1,150,236.39	Total Passenger Revenue as per Income Account.					

Street, of homes on the Hudson or Long Island or of "cattle on a thousand hills," these riches, or the money they represent, have ever been drawn from an over willing, over timorous people who at the same time have never ceased to wring their gaunt hands at the impositions of that fearful thing we call government. We forget that we, ourselves, create this government to rule over us solely for our benefit; that it is always a part of ourselves and cannot exist away from us.

(3) Those who enrich themselves of the public are zealous advocates of the old ways and days. It were socialism and worse for the people to attempt to own those public utilities which might prove profitable. But how is obtained the conclusion has never been determined that characterizes as "socialism" the proprietorship of the presumably profitable public enterprises, but as a correct function of government, the ownership of those which gather their entire cost on the wrong side of the municipal profit and loss account. Socialism and anarchy in the minds of many are synonymous. Hence, even if the project be highly advantageous to the people, that it has a tinge of socialism is enough to condemn it to the stake where have been consumed in all ages the representatives of the liberal, the advantageous and the free.

(4) Many other reasons, as we know, have been more commonly urged against the usually profitable public utilities being owned by the people. Mr. F. B. Thurber, in the North American Review of June, 1906, gives the most important of these reasons as well as the writer has noted anywhere and as briefly. Mr. Thurber wrote:

"In a country with universal suffrage it is desirable to limit the number of public officials to the smallest possible number for political reasons. Also, there are economic reasons which apply especially to lighting, traction and other public service corporations which are large buyers of materials, employ large numbers of persons and require a high order of administrative ability.

"Public officials where municipal plants have been established are naturally interested in making a good showing and holding their easy jobs; in many instances their bookkeeping omits interest, taxes and depreciation, sinking fund for renewals or improvements and other returns which a private corporation must recognize. The taxpayer is a convenient beast of burden

upon which to unload deficits and he in turn unloads on the rent payers where he can. Under public ownership new inventions, improvements and extensions are ignored. Under private ownership the best professional talent is employed at salaries unheard of in public employment and all these improvements are at once utilized, giving the public an up-to-date service."

Notice that the objections of Mr. Thurber are four in number, viz.:

(a) Makes too many officials.

(b) Employs incompetent administrators.

(c) Induces poor bookkeeping.

(d) Fails to take advantage of new inventions and improvements.

Let us stop by the roadside a moment to gaze at the grim, grey landscape painted by Mr. Thurber.

(a) "Desirable to limit the number of public officials to the smallest possible number for political reasons," he urges. Anyone ever know of that being urged against the number of officials in a street department, or in a fire department, or police department? Policemen and firemen also are "public officials" in a certain sense. They serve the public under pay and exercise considerable discretion in their work. Is it desirable to limit these to the smallest possible number for political reasons? As soon as we jump into profitable public utilities many "public officials" become highly dangerous to the safety and well being of the city.

(b) The municipality fails to hire men competent to buy and otherwise administer, states Mr. Thurber. We ask, ever hear this urged against the administration of departments that are purely an expense? Why not turn the street department over to a private corporation because there are a large number of men to be hired and a great amount of material to be bought and the city cannot find men to buy without discovering later that its purchases of supposedly sound, natural nutmegs all are of wood? Why not? But incompetency, again, for some unaccountable reason extends only to those public utilities in the successful management of which recreant dollars may be gathered into the city's treasury. A Horace Greeley, long of whiskers and unblacked of boots, forty odd years ago when wise, learned men planned, advised, consulted and debated as to the best manner to resume specie payments ventured that "The only way to

resume is to resume." So here, the only way to get competent men is to get them.

(c) But how about the poor bookkeeping? Every employee anywhere wants to make a good showing. This applies, too, as well to one municipal department as to another; no more to supposedly profitable public utilities. This objection is the centuries old exortation once more, do not do business for fear somebody will cheat you. It is the argument of the cringing, pale faced, weak eyed citizen of the receding chin, not of the energetic, full chested American.

(d) The city will not take advantage of new inventions, and improvements, writes Mr. Thurber, especially as it will not pay enough salaries. If a city is too stingy and short-sighted to pay enough to take advantage of men's abilities, then it must suffer for its meanness. But this is an argument which may apply to some cities, not a general objection to the municipal ownership of public utilities usually profitable.

II.

The Geary Road.

Out on the western coast by the sea peaceful, San Francisco, still in her youth as a great city, but the largest in population west of St. Louis, and the largest commercially and financially west of Chicago, has long had her weather eye open and roving over the municipal landscape for that which might improve herself. She has been like the "timorous dove" often and often, as have all other cities—and all individuals for that matter. She has cogitated long and well over such arguments as those of brother Thurber. But this is the city, remember, which in 1906, close on the iron heels of an earthquake, which kicked a hole through her back, was seared from crown to toes by a raving, ravaging fire. It is the same city which has healed her wounds and cured her burns and now appears keen, fresh and strong and holds forth the glad hand of greeting to all the world to come to her in 1915 to learn what an American city and a strip of western coast in America have done and will do, and to view, at the same time, some exhibits of the world's work.

Back in 1900 when she adopted a new city charter, this city inserted its purpose to obtain, hold and operate its public utilities. In 1896 and in 1898 the Geary St., Park & Ocean Railroad Co., called the Geary Road, had attempted to secure a fifty year extension of its franchise from the city and had failed. This road was a cable railway extending from Market Street, the principal thoroughfare of San Francisco, lying nearly all between the Ferry Building on the east and Twin Peaks on the west, northwest on Geary Street to Fifth Avenue, and along Fifth Avenue to the Golden Gate Park at Fulton Street. The road tried again in 1903 to obtain this extension and a third time failed.

Photo Blum

Opening Municipal Car Line on Potrero Ave.
Mayor Rolph bareheaded in center speaking from automobile.

After the expiration of its charter Nov. 6, 1903, until May, 1905, this road paid 5% of its gross earnings to the city for a temporary right to operate. Then the Board of Supervisors of San Francisco set aside $325,000 of the regular budget of the city for the purchase of the railway and for its reconstruction. Despite the doubtful legality of this method of acquisition, plans and specifications were prepared. The engineering department was about to take up the work when the disaster of 1906 put municipal railways far into the rear.

Even in 1902 this progressive city had voted as to whether or not it would buy, convert to an electric road and then extend to Ocean Beach this railway under a bond issue of $700,000. But the prudent new city charter demanded a conservative two-thirds vote to adopt such a proviso. The timorous, quaking ones of the city, made more numerous by the warning shouts of those who wanted the railway pie all to themselves, were more than a third of those who voted that December 2, day.

Yet this primal taste to the city in voting on the acquisition of a municipal trolley line gave it appetite for more. So on October 8, 1903, it again voted on the same question with a bond issue of $710,000 and again the hills of San Francisco failed to shed that two-thirds vote.

The work of upbuilding the city in that glad air gave these westerners more courage. At it they went again on June 24, 1909. This time as to whether or not they would bond for $1,950,-000; but too many men by 204 who might have voted yes remained by their saws and hammers.

The more San Franciscans voted on bonding for municipal railways, the more they liked the fun. When it were thought this voting business might in time replace the annual Portola Festival, lo, on December 30, 1909, the requisite two-thirds courageously came to the polls and voted to bond for $2,020,000 to build an electric road from Geary Street on the north side of Market Street, about a half mile from its foot, down this street, to the Ferries and to build a similar line on Geary Street west to the Pacific. Indeed, about 3 to 1 was this vote.

Between 1915 and 1934 these bonds mature in the amount of $101,000 per year; are in the amount of $1,000 per share and bear 4½% interest. Only $51,000 of these bonds are unsold, giving a total of $1,969,000 from the sale of bonds to which may be added $2,341 in premiums, furnishing an entire of $1,971,341 devoted to this road.

If you are interested enough to wish to follow out the work of San Francisco in this newfangled endeavor, you will ask (1) just how did it spend this amount, if the city spent it; (2) what, if anything, has the city now to show for the money, and (3) what income, if any, is it getting for the expenditure? Complimenting you to the degree of suggesting we believe you want to know what we just named, an effort will be made to reach these features of municipal government.

(1) When the Geary Road was taken by San Francisco, the railway had a total length over the hills of 7.67 miles, all single track. Under the contract with the city the company which operated the road was paid nothing for old rails and equipment, but it might remove whatever it chose. On May 5, 1912, the last car was run over this cable road.

A new, strong and steadfast roadbed was constructed in concrete. The road was put in operation as a trolley line with ten new cars on December 28, 1912, in Geary Street from Kearny to the Beach and the Golden Gate Park. No cars were run on the streets now covered between the dates last named, but some of

Photo Blum

Offices and Car Barn of Geary Road.

the work of construction was done during the preceding year. The railway was so extended that on June 24, 1913, trolley cars were first run the entire width of the San Francisco peninsula, from Ocean Beach on the west at the end of Cabrillo Street through Cabrillo Street to Balboa Street, then to the Ferry Building at the foot of Market Street on the east. Twenty-eight cars were then operated. The course of the old Geary Road was covered except the extension on Fifth Avenue to Fulton Street, which was thrown up and an extension has been built

on Tenth Avenue to Fulton Street and the Golden Gate Park. The line is a double track trolley and is 7.56 miles in length. From Sansome Street, which intersects Market Street on the north, the short distance to the Ferry is covered over the tracks of the United Railroads. But for this space, a track owned by the city is soon to be obtained.

When the railway was put in operation, the city had a new fireproof building of reinforced concrete at the corner of Geary Street and Presidio Avenue for the offices of the line and for a car barn where 65 cars may be stored. This car barn has since been extended to contain 140 cars. Another new barn of 80 cars capacity, has been completed at 17th and Hampshire Sts. The outside measurements of the Geary Street barn are 275 feet by 343 feet. The Hampshire Street barn is 200 feet by 382 feet over all.

Land was also bought for a power house. Power is bought of the Pacific Gas and Electric Company at one cent per kilowat hour delivered to the feed wires. San Francisco looks, however, with enthusiastic anticipation to the completion of its design in Hetch-Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park, made legally operative by the Raker Bill signed by President Wilson, December 19, 1913, giving the city the right to build a dam at least 200 feet high across this valley and to bring, besides water, an approximate 145,000 horse-power 165 miles to the command of the city. When this work shall have been completed, a saving in cost of power for its trolley lines will be effected for this city.

On December 31, 1913, the Municipal Railway and equipment had cost $1,657,251.38, leaving nearly $300,000 from the original estimate of the cost. But a power house, included in this estimate, has not yet been built. The cost of constructing the Geary Road with equipment was $103,564 per mile of single track.

(2) On the Geary Road are run 39 cars each day at less than 2-minute intervals during the busiest part of the day. Between the Ferry and Van Ness Avenue the cars are operated on a headway of 1 minute and 12 seconds and from Van Ness Avenue to the Beach on a headway of 1 minute and 32 seconds, both during rush hours. These cars are steel, of the "California" type, with a closed center section, and at either end open sections which may be closed by sliding curtains. They each seat 48 adults and are supposed to have a carrying capacity for 110 passengers, but 145 persons have several times been carried by one. Each car is 47 feet and 1 inch long and 8 feet 6 inches wide and is

provided with a Westinghouse equipment of four 60 horse-power motors.

165 men are on the city's pay-roll connected with this road, consisting of 130 platform men and 35 other employees.

(3) Regardless of Mr. Thurber, "Prove all things" is a good motto for the management of any business. About April 1, 1914, a printed pamphlet of 14 pages was given to the public having on its front page the following: "Financial Report of the Geary Street Municipal Railway of San Francisco, December 20, 1912 to December 31, 1913, as prepared and approved by the Finance Committee of the Board of Supervisors, adopted by the Board of Supervisors January 19, 1914." This report is in compliance with Article 12, Section 16, paragraph 3 of the city charter which provides, "The City and County, when owning any public utility shall keep the books of account for such utility distinct from other city and county accounts, and in such manner as to show the true and complete financial results of such municipal ownership .... If any service shall be furnished .... without charge the accounts shall show .... the value of such service and also the value of such similar service rendered by the public utility to any other municipal department without charge. Such accounts shall also show reasonable allowance for interest, depreciation and insurance and estimates of the amount of taxes that would be chargeable against such property if owned by a private corporation. The supervisors shall cause to be printed annually for public distribution, a report showing the financial results in form as aforesaid." This report is audited by William Dolge, Certified Public Accountant, and is accompanied by his statement that " the accounts as maintained by the Bookkeeper of the Board of Public Works are classified as prescribed by the Inter-State Commerce Commission," and that, as to the balance sheet, "it is correctly prepared from the accounts in compliance with Charter requirements and shows the financial condition of the Municipal Railway of San Francisco as at December 31, 1913." This report is very fair, complete and detailed. But scant cause for criticism of its form and manner of statement is found. This report gives total revenues of $446,076.37, total operating expenses, depreciation and interest, $360,730.57, and gives $85,345.80 net profit, year ending December 31, 1913. The general expenditures are $181,890.14. For taxes, $35,454 are allowed and for insurance, $1,137.33. Allow-

ance for legal and clerical charges of $4,587.33 is made. A total of 9,723,177 passengers were carried during the year and three days of the road's operation. Deducting the items of service, insurance and taxes, "thus showing the accounts as if the railway were owned by a private corporation" gives a net profit of $45,304.47.

The writer assumes that by "insurance" is meant insurance on all taxable property of the road, to include the cars, costing $342,631.47, and the car house and office building, then costing $235,651.70. "Taxes" are in compliance with the city charter quoted. The franchise tax under the charter is 3%. Of the gross revenues, 4¾% constitute a state tax under the law. The federal income tax is 1% on the net income and the municipal car license is $547.50. Up to January 30th, 1913, interest was computed on the total amount of bonds sold, giving a net for interest of $139,618.81. The total cost of the bond elections, which was $91,905, is not included, but there is included the cost of the bond election of December 30, 1909, and of the referendum election of April 22, 1913, both amounting to $29,628.54. Nor yet is comprised the $325,000 set aside in 1906, for this amount was used in reconstruction and reequipment of streets and public buildings after the disaster of 1906.

Under advice of Delos F. Wilcox, one of the highest authorities in the United States on municipal government, the city has set aside 18% of the gross receipts of the road for sinking fund and depreciation. This for the first year means $80,054.59. It has been the policy of the road to make this assignment for sinking fund of approximately $8,300 per month needful, without waiting for the bonds to begin to mature on July 1, 1915. But the writer not being in the same class, or classes, with Messrs. Wilcox and Thurber, is prone to remark that under his theory in such a matter, putting aside both sinking fund and depreciation is paying for the original cost twice, save for interest on the sinking fund. Sinking fund pays by annual installments the original outlay. Depreciation theoretically epitomizes the life of the deacon's "one hoss shay" which wheeled its century, then "all at once" fell in pieces, every part worthless. One starts with the total original cost and pays this cost down to nothing. The other takes what is represented by that cost and follows, in lessening money value, its decline and decay to dissolution and ruin.

harvest in this kind of pabulum, gathered largely from the crop of damage suits.

In the statements quoted, no allowance is made for general management. The Board of Public Works supervise the municipal railways. If a manager were hired, it would be at an expense of several thousand dollars per year.

The year's item for conducting transportation was $182,-097.13. An amendment to the city charter, passed by the legislature February 17, 1911, gives all employees of the road at least $3.00 per day. The words of the charter are as follows:

"Wages and hours of employees.

(Section 7, H.). Every franchise shall provide that employees shall be paid not less than $3.00 per day and that eight hours shall be the maximum hours of labor in any calendar day, the same to be completed within ten hours, provided that nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit over-time employment, wages for such employment to be at one and a half times the said rate of wages, proportion, etc., to each hour of such extra service."

It is stated on excellent authority that no other electric railway in the United States pays a minimum wage of $3.00. The California Street Cable Railroad Company, Mr. J. W. Harris, Supt., pays a wage to platform men of 25 cents an hour for the first year, 30 cents per hour for the next four years, and later, 33 cents an hour while the sands of employment continue to run for the help. The same rate is paid for over-time. Ten hours are a day. This road pays the customary rate to mechanics and $2.50 a day of nine hours to an ordinary laborer. The United Railroads, Mr. C. N. Black, Mgr., pay their platform men 25 cents an hour for the first six months, for work from six months to twelve months, 27 cents, from 1 year to 2 years, 30 cents, and an increase of 1 cent a year thereafter up to 9 years of service. Both Manager Black and Supt. Harris stated to the writer that they are paying enough for work, and that a large number of men are always ready for this employment.

Counting charge for general management against the road and adding the cost of all of the four city elections, three ot which were needful to train the people to vote right, still for them, because of courage and sagacity in acquiring and ability in managing and in superintending, a very comfortable and tempting balance hung from this railway branch of the municipal

tree about Xmas time in 1913. Mayor Rolph of San Francisco on good authority was reported to state, "instead of a gold brick, as its opponents called the project, I consider it a veritable gold mine." Since we are not inclined to see the glint of the yellow metal save where it actually appears, given the choice between the Geary Road and any gold mine likely to be found even in Golden California, prima facie, as the lawyers say, we modestly but very decidedly select the Geary Road.

III.

The Union Street Line.

On August 26, 1913, the legal voters of San Francisco by vote of 51,649 to 13,720 authorized a bond issue of $3,500,000 to build new trolley lines on Church Street, Eleventh Street and Potrero Avenue, Stockton Street and Van Ness Avenue, for the rebuilding of the lines on California Street, and for the taking over of the Union Street line whose charter expired December 10, 1913. In fulfillment of this vote and in partial satisfaction of the city's newly acquired appetite for trolley lines, on December 11, 1913, the Presidio and Ferries Street Railroad Company passed into the strong hands of San Francisco. The franchise price was precisely determined at $312,535.72. A board of arbitration fixed the value on all property purchased upon a reproduction cost basis, minus depreciation.

Following a Geary Street example, San Francisco for this line buys new cars and reconstructs the roadbed. The city under terms of purchase took over from the old company shop equipment and stores, track, extra rails and switches, and 29 cars, of which about 26 are running. The purchase included in the entire 3.78 miles of double track road. This road now employs 97 platform men and 18 other employees; 115 altogether.

The city under separate contract leased the old car barns and car offices of the Union Street line. From there this road is managed. On August 15, 1914, the Van Ness Avenue and Potrero Avenue lines began running to the Exposition grounds. San Francisco now has a trolley line from the Presidio and the Golden